

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

UKRAINIANS IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA¹

THE HISTORY of Ukrainian immigration to Pennsylvania constitutes a large part of the history of the Ukrainians in the United States. From the very genesis of mass migration from the Ukraine to America, which was in 1877, until 1930, when immigration was almost at a standstill, close to fifty per cent of the Ukrainian immigrants were bound for Pennsylvania. The United States immigration records list them as Ruthenians (Russniaks) rather than Ukrainians. A large number of Ukrainian immigrants have also been listed as Russians, Austrians, and occasionally as Poles and Slovaks, depending on the nationality of the clerks at Ellis Island. Consequently the immigration records are not very reliable, but even so they show that a grand total of 268,311 Ruthenians (Ukrainians) entered the United States during the years 1899-1930, and of that number 114,179 gave Pennsylvania as their destination.²

Although the entire Ukraine, more or less, is represented in the polyglot population of Pennsylvania, the largest number of people who went to America were from the provinces of eastern Galicia and Ruthenia, both of which were parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire until 1918. These provinces are noted for their beautiful scenery and for their artistic population, but a long period of foreign domination had kept the country in a state of economic depression. Mineral resources were available, but the government did not encourage their development. The rural population kept increasing, the small farms had to be redivided among the grown sons and daughters, and each succeeding generation became poorer than the preceding. As there were no industries and most of the business

¹ The author of this note, Dr. Wasyl Halich, has written a doctoral dissertation for the University of Iowa on "Economic Aspects of Ukrainian Activity in the United States" and is continuing his studies in this field. He is "a first generation American of Ukrainian ancestry." *Ed.*

² Wasyl Halich, "Economic Aspects of Ukrainian Activity in the United States," 131-137 (University of Iowa thesis, 1934).

was in the hands of Jewish merchants, the only things left for the local Ukrainian rural population were farming and farm labor. Because of the great number of laborers the wages of farm hands were very low. Unable to earn much at home, some of the stronger members of the families were forced to seek employment in other parts of Europe during the summer season and return home for the winter. Under such conditions not many families had all the necessities of life, and poverty had its inevitable companion, ignorance. The tax money obtained by the government went to Vienna or Budapest rather than for local education and betterment. The compulsory school laws were not enforced because in many cases no schools were available, and as a result about forty-nine per cent of the Ukrainian emigrants to America were illiterate.³ In addition to economic hardships, the Ukrainians were subjected to religious, cultural, and political persecutions by their bitter enemies, the Poles and the Magyars, who, although minority groups in the Ukrainian provinces, were given ascendancy over the Ukrainians by the government. Under such conditions Russian "Pan-Slavic" propaganda flooded the country after 1848. The Russian Czarist government spent large sums of money on propaganda among the Ukrainians that were under Austria in an attempt to make them Russian sympathizers. It maintained paid agents in eastern Galicia and Ruthenia and published newspapers through which it expected to further imperialistic plans. It is obvious that the long-suffering Ukrainian people were not immune to the Russian propaganda, which followed them even to Pennsylvania. It is no wonder that some of the Ukrainian immigrants whose ancestors were not Russian, never saw Russia, and who themselves do not know twenty-five words of the Russian language call themselves "Russian."⁴

In 1877 Pennsylvania anthracite coal-mining companies experienced a long strike of their workers, which caused much discomfort to the mine

³ As a result of Ukrainian evening schools and the desire of the immigrants to learn, the illiteracy has been reduced in America among men to about ten per cent and among women to about twenty per cent.

⁴ Mikhaïlo Hrushevs'kii, *Iliustrovana istoriia Ukraini*, 502, 527-531 (second edition, Winnipeg, n.d.). Before its downfall the old Russian government, through the Holy Synod, spent \$77,850 annually to support missionary propaganda in America among the Ukrainians. Jerome Davis, *The Russian Immigrant*, 91 (New York, 1922).

owners and the public. It was then that an agent representing a coal company in Pennsylvania appeared in the western provinces of the Ukraine and began recruiting mine laborers.⁵ As an inducement he promised steady employment and high wages. A few daring men decided to go to America. Much excitement accompanied their departure; their relatives lamented they would never see them again. In the course of a few months letters came from America, and before long American dollars also. Because of the high exchange value of the dollar in Europe, the American wages seemed almost fabulous and greatly stimulated emigration to America.

When the first Ukrainian immigrants arrived in the vicinity of Shenandoah and Shamokin the strike was still going on. Not knowing the English language, the newcomers did not understand the existing conditions; and, forced by necessity, they went to work in the mines as strike breakers. This brought upon them the enmity of the "old immigrants." Frequent riots took place during the strike, the ill feeling of the old miners toward the new workers lasted for many years, and as a result many an immigrant suffered an "accidental" death in the mines. Immigration, however, increased annually and the immigrants spread throughout Pennsylvania and into other states.⁶

It was not until 1899 that the federal immigration officials began to record the number of immigrants according to nationalities. It is impossible to determine how many Ukrainians came to America before 1899; their numbers have been variously estimated at from two to five hundred thousand. Although these figures are too high, nevertheless the Austrian and Russian governments, alarmed because so many young people were departing for America, laid obstacles in the way of emigration. Less than a decade after the arrival of the first Ukrainians in Pennsylvania they had become so numerous that, when their first missionary, the Reverend John Volansky, came to Shenandoah in 1884, he was able to organize several

⁵ Julian Batchinsky, *Ukrainska immigracia w Zjedinenich Dershavach Americi*, 1:88 (Lemberg, Poland, 1914).

⁶ The information in this paragraph was obtained from the Reverend M. Guryansky, Ukrainian pastor at Olyphant, who has had personal contact with the first Ukrainian immigrants to Pennsylvania.

churches in that region and he found it necessary to make numerous trips to Pittsburgh and even to other states to administer to the spiritual needs of his people.⁷

The years immediately preceding the World War brought the largest number of Ukrainians to Pennsylvania. They settled in all the industrial centers and penetrated to the most remote mining communities in the state. The majority, however, live in western Pennsylvania, and such industrial manufacturing centers as Johnstown, Pittsburgh, McKeesport, McKees Rocks, Homestead, Ambridge, Butler, and New Castle are the chief centers of Ukrainian immigrant groups. Practically all the mining villages have a large per cent of Ukrainian population. In 1934 there were 115 communities in western Pennsylvania that had a sufficiently large Ukrainian population to support some kind of Ukrainian organization. At the present time the total number of immigrants and their descendants in the entire state may be estimated at about three hundred thousand.⁸

Although the Ukrainian peasants possessed native intelligence they were uneducated and, in a majority of cases, did not take with them to America any knowledge of a trade. Their love for their native land was so great that they expected to work in the United States a short time only, earn a few hundred dollars, and go back to the Ukraine. This hope is expressed in a short Ukrainian poem, the translation of which is as follows:

I am working beneath the ground,
Digging my own grave,
In order to build you a home
In our native land.

Then shall I return to the native land,
To the native village,

⁷ Stephan Makar, in *The Svoboda* (Mount Carmel), November 4, 1897; *Dictionary of Races or Peoples*, 118 (61 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 662); Emily G. Balch, *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens*, 135-137 (New York, 1910); A. Drozdiak, "Pochatok Shamokinskoi hromady," manuscript in the possession of the author; "Istoria Ukrainskoye Katolytskoye Parochii w Shamokin, Pa.," in the *Calendar of the Orphan's Home*, 80-84 (Philadelphia, 1935).

⁸ This estimate cannot be substantiated by the census reports, but it is based on a study of old and current newspapers, reports of the churches, various benevolent societies, and extensive travel and investigation by the author in various communities.

And there with my wife and a child
Happily live in a cottage.⁹

The immigrants took with them, however, strength and ambition to succeed, and over ninety per cent of them did remain in America. Their work kept them busy during the industrial boom; they became accustomed to American life, learned English—many of them also learned to read and write in their own language—and became American citizens. Those who planned to go back to their families in the Ukraine but found themselves overtaken by the war while in America had their hopes blasted completely when, at the close of the war, their country, instead of being made a free Ukraine, was divided among the four neighboring nations of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and Rumania. A reign of terror in the Ukraine caused by Bolshevik and Polish rule created more American citizens of the Ukrainians than any other single factor: the immigrants concluded that America was the best place for them and that they were there to stay.

The chief occupation of Ukrainians in Pennsylvania, as well as in the United States, is manual labor in factories and mines. The iron and steel industries of Pittsburgh and neighboring cities employ many thousands of Ukrainian workers. Although they prefer domestic service, and those who speak English make excellent house servants, many of the girls and young women have been attracted to the factories because of the higher wages.¹⁰ The coal mining districts of the upper Monongahela region in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and of southeastern Ohio have several hundred communities where the Ukrainians, Slovaks, and Poles constitute over ninety per cent of the population. The value of immigrant labor to expanding American industries is obvious. The wages paid for their manual labor have been low. According to the accounts published in one of the Ukrainian papers in 1922, Ukrainians in Pittsburgh then worked for the following wages: common laborers thirty to thirty-two cents an hour; mechanics forty-eight and a half, fifty, and sixty cents an hour.¹¹ They also work on railroads and in garages, hotels, and restaurants. The

⁹ Hr. Hrushka, in *The Svoboda* (Shamokin), November 7, 1895.

¹⁰ Ivan Ardan, "The Ruthenians in America," in *Charities*, 13: 249 (December 3, 1904).

¹¹ *Norodna Wola* (Scranton), June 27, 1922.

American-born, of course, enter into every kind of employment that is available, and the girls with a high school education work in stores or offices. In addition to the miners and factory workers there are about four hundred Ukrainian farmers in western Pennsylvania. They are mostly former city residents who disliked city life and went back to the soil. Many of their farms are situated near the cities or in the former mining regions from which all the coal has been removed. There are two large agricultural groups in Erie County, one near Erie and one near Albion.¹² About four per cent of the Ukrainian immigrants enter business and the professions. In Pittsburgh and other cities they conduct such establishments as grocery stores combined with butcher shops, candy stores, hardware stores, general stores, taverns, small hotels, restaurants, barber shops, beauty parlors, tailor shops, and real estate agencies. In nearly all cases the business is owned by an individual; partnership is rare. Most of the businesses are established in immigrant communities, such as the South Side district of Pittsburgh. The professional men, except for the clergy, are not numerous. In a majority of cases they are the immigrants who had received a public school education in Europe, worked in the factories in America until they had a small sum of money with which to start on the road to higher education, then worked their way through advanced institutions until they attained their goal. There are a few public-school teachers, lawyers, dentists, and engineers.¹³

Because of the low wages Ukrainian immigrants received for many years they lived under conditions that were below the average American standard. They rented small wooden houses near the factories. Since not many immigrants brought families during the first years of mass migration, those who did had many opportunities to supplement their earnings by taking roomers and boarders. As a result the small houses were overcrowded. It was not out of the ordinary to find from four to six men occupying a room. Every space had to be utilized to provide room for two or three beds, a table, and trunks. The average lodging rate paid by such roomers in the industrial centers was about five dollars a month. Small as

¹² Batchinsky, *Ukrainska immigracia*, 1: 172-174; letter from Mr. John Ulan, Jr., to the author, February 6, 1932.

¹³ McKeesport has four Ukrainian-American teachers; several other cities in western Pennsylvania have one each. Letter from Mr. P. Halma to the author, July 18, 1934.

the sum appears it increased the family income. As soon as a measure of prosperity was attained, however, the Ukrainian Americans purchased or built modern houses and adopted American standards of living, so that the position of the women, who had overtaxed their strength and had aged prematurely in caring for numerous boarders in addition to their own large families, improved and the children were given the best of education.

The metropolitan area of Pittsburgh is the cultural center of the Ukrainians for the entire western half of the state. There several Ukrainian papers are published and hundreds of societies maintained. Three of the mutual aid societies of national character have their head offices in the district: the Ukrainian National Aid Association in Pittsburgh, the Sojedeninija in Homestead, and the Sobranija in McKeesport. Homestead is also the seat of the diocese of one of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic sects. Its present bishop is the Most Reverend Basil Takach. In the city of Pittsburgh alone there are ten Ukrainian churches; although some of them are designated as "Russian" or "Ruthenian," their worshipers are purely Ukrainian in race and speech. At one time or another each church has maintained a large choir that has gained local renown. Occasional musical performances given in large halls are of superior quality. The young people from Ukrainian homes who attend the various colleges in Pittsburgh are organized into a group known as the "College Club," which publishes a monthly leaflet.

Ukrainians seem to disagree frequently among themselves over political and religious questions, but with their English-speaking neighbors they get along very well. As a matter of fact, they often coöperate much better with the people of other races than with those of their own; and Ukrainian business men often complain that their fellow countrymen do not support their business but go to the Jews, the Poles, or the Americans instead. They have no police record. They support civic projects if asked to do so by their American neighbors. The more intelligent immigrants are very patriotic; the uneducated are frequently indifferent. In some cities the immigrants themselves or their sons have won the respect of their American fellow citizens and have entered into business partnerships with them or have served in such civic offices as justice of the peace and mem-

ber of the school board. The borough of Arnold, with a small Ukrainian population, has two school board members of Ukrainian nationality, one of whom is president of the board. Both men are well known and apparently well liked in their community, judged by the votes they received in the last election.¹⁴

Superior, Wisconsin

WASYL HALICH

ALBERT A. HORNE—A MEMORIAL¹

THE HISTORICAL Society of Western Pennsylvania has lost another of its most faithful and best loved members by the death of Albert A. Horne, who for many years interested himself in the work of this organization.

Born on April 21, 1847, at Schellsburg, Bedford County, Albert Horne came to Pittsburgh in his early manhood and entered the employ of his second cousin, the late Joseph Horne, founder of the mercantile establishment that still bears his name. The young man's first days in the store were made memorable by the assassination of President Lincoln, which made a deep impression on him. Thus he often described the effect of the president's death upon the people of Pittsburgh: "I had started working two days before the assassination. When word reached here of the tragedy, the whole city showed its grief. Within a few hours after the stores had opened the morning after his death, black goods were sold so fast extra clerks had to be brought into service." In 1880, with Scott Ward, he opened a retail dry goods store of his own, Horne & Ward, later Horne and Stewart. The firm continued in business until 1906, when Albert Horne returned to the Joseph Horne Co., where he remained until his death. He celebrated the seventieth anniversary of his services in the business some time ago, but the "dean of the retail mercantile business" never had a thought of retiring. Leaders in civic life have paid high tribute to his character. He saw the store where he was employed grow from a small shop on Market Street to a great metropolitan

¹⁴ *Narodne Slovo* (Pittsburgh), March 8, 1934.

¹ Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on March 26, 1935. *Ed.*

institution and he remained devoted to true merchandising principles throughout the years. Though he was eighty-seven years old at the time of his death, his memory was keen, his mind alert, and his recollections of early Pittsburgh were vivid. He delighted to recall past experiences, and his friends remember with pleasure his many stories, told with humor and expression.

Mr. Horne was for many years a member of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; from 1927 to 1932 he served as vice president, and since 1932 as a trustee and member of the council. He was also a member of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the American Revolution; various Masonic bodies, among them Syria Shrine and the Scottish Rite consistory; and the Methodist Church Union, of which he was vice president. Mr. Horne leaves his two daughters, Mrs. George P. Black of New York and Mrs. William F. Lloyd of Sewickley, and several grandchildren. The members of this society, as well as his many friends, will miss his cheerful, energetic presence.

Pittsburgh

EMILIE McCREERY